1. INTRODUCTION

The moment a person enters into this world, he becomes a consumer. Wants are unlimited, resources are limited and consumers have alternatives uses. In such a situation, each consumer is faced with the problem of innumerable choice. Each consumer aims at maximization of his satisfaction within his given income. When he approaches the market as a consumer, he expects value for money. In the early times, consumer was considered as king of the market but in the modern society, he is no longer safe against the mal practices such as, substandard goods and unsatisfactory services. The consumer has every right to reject any product or services rendered by any manufacturer in the market and can insist them to produce goods of his choice. Indian Consumers are ignorant, illiterate and do not know the role of consumption, economic system as well as quality of life. When they are ignorant of their rights, they cannot know their responsibility as consumers. Consumers in the market find themselves cheated by wrong weights and measures, adulterated and substandard products causing great damages to health. Consumers prefer to be silent rather than fight against injustice. The reason is that consumers do not know the ways and means of facing them confidently. At present the consumer movement in India is in its infancy. Vast majority of the people are not even aware of consumer movement which is connected with the protection of their interest. Many constitutional provisions have been made by government to protect the consumers. Until and unless the consumers avail of these provisions, the protection of consumer becomes impossible. There is a great need to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Consumer awareness with regards to the availability of goods, prices and quality is a must to attain the very basic objective of maximization of satisfaction. Consumer Awareness is part and parcel of consumer movement which is related with consumer protection and consumerism. Consumer movement emerged on account of deceptive marketing techniques adapted by marketers, shortage of consumer goods, adulteration of goods, misleading advertisement, change in dimension in the society, The increase in income and education and active campaign by the consumer organization and role of the government in protecting the consumer’s interest through the Consumer Protection Act.
The protection of the rights of the common consumers, if viewed in the above background, gains utmost significance. The industrial revolution and the development in international trade and commerce have led to the vast expansion of business and trade. As a result of which a variety of consumer goods have appeared in the market to cater to the needs of the consumers and also services have been made available to the consumers such as insurance, transport, electricity, housing, entertainment, finance and banking. A well-organized sector of manufacturers and traders with better knowledge of markets has come into existence, which affected the relationship between the traders and the consumers, the principle of consumer sovereignty almost ignored.

With the introduction of a number of specialised satellite channels, television enjoys a large viewership. Exposure to the marketplace has made consumers aware of the different kinds of products that are available. Advertisements are no doubt an important source of information as they help to inform consumers about the availability of different products before making their choice. The advertisements of goods and services on television, in newspapers and magazines influence the demand for the same by the consumers though there may be manufacturing defects or imperfections or shortcomings in the quality, quantity and the purity of the goods or there may be deficiency in the services rendered. Advertising influences the food preferences and eating habits to a large extent. Unfortunately, many advertisements make false promises and give incomplete descriptions of products. The production of the same item by many firms has led the consumers, who are busy, to think before they can purchase the best. It then becomes very important to check details before buying products.

However, this is largely unknown to many citizens irrespective of whether they are educated or uneducated. With an enormous population along with high levels of poverty, unemployment and poor literacy levels, consumer awareness continues to remain low. Education is a life long process of constantly acquiring relevant information, knowledge and skills. Consumer education is an important part of this process and is a basic consumer right. According to the definition of consumer, it include all citizens who are affected by almost all government, public or private decisions. The most important step in consumer education is awareness of consumer rights. Consumer education also involves environmental education as it deals with the importance of conserving natural resources and sustaining the environment, including the direct health effects of environmental pollution and toxic products on consumers. However, consumer education
is incomplete without the responsibilities and duties of consumers, and this influences individual behaviour to a great extent.

**Definitions:**

The key terms used in this study are as follows:

1) **Consumer:**

Any person who buys or uses goods and services is a consumer. A Consumer is any person, business, firm or government unit that chooses goods and services, spends money on them and uses these goods & services primarily to satisfy their own wants.

2) **Consumer Awareness:**

According to Prof. Philip Kotlar “Consumerism is not limited to organized efforts only but, is a social movement seeking to augment the rights & powers of the buyers in relation to sellers”.

3) **Consumer education**

Consumer education means to educate the consumers as to what, where, when, how and how much to buy and how to use what they have bought.

4) **Goods**

Goods means every kind of movable property other than actionable claims and money, and includes stock and shares, growing crops, grass, and this attached to or forming part of the land which are agreed to be severed before sale or under the contract of sale.

5) **Service**

Service means service of any description which is made available to potential users and includes the provision of facilities in connection with banking, financing, insurance,
transport, processing, supply of electrical or other energy, board or lodging or both, housing construction, entertainment, amusement or other information, but does not include the rendering of any service free of charge or under a contract of personal service.

6) **Restrictive trade practice**

Restrictive trade practice means a trade practice which tends to bring about manipulation of price or its conditions of delivery or to affect flow of supplies in the market relating to goods or services in such a manner as to impose on the consumer’s unjustified costs or restrictions.

7) **Defect**

Defect means any fault, imperfection or shortcoming in the quality, quantity, potency, purity or standard which is required to be maintained by or under any law for the time being in force or under any contract express or implied or as is claimed by the trader in any manner whatsoever in relation to any goods.

8) **Deficiency**

Deficiency means any fault, imperfection, shortcoming or inadequacy in the quality, nature and manner of performance which is required to be maintained by or under any law for the time being in force or has been undertaken to be performed by a person in pursuance of a contract or otherwise in relation to any service.

9) **Unfair trade practice**

Unfair trade practice means a trade practice which, for the purpose of promoting the sale, use or supply of any goods or for the provision of any service, adopts any unfair method or unfair or deceptive practice.
10) Consumerism

Consumerism is a movement or policies aimed at regulating the products or services, methods or standards of manufacturers, sellers and advertisers in the interest of buyers, such regulation may be institutional, statutory or embodied in a voluntary code occupied by a particular industry or it may result more indirectly from the influence of consumer organizations.

11) Consumer awareness

Consumer awareness means making the consumer aware of his/her rights.

12) Consumer protection

Consumer protection is government regulation to protect the rights and interests of consumers.

13) Consumer dispute

Consumer dispute means a dispute where the person against whom a complaint has been made, denies or disputes the allegations contained in the complaint.